DISMEMBERING THE BODY POLITIC

Partisan Politics in England's Towns, 1650–1730

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The paradox of partisan politics

Queen Elizabeth made Preston's governors "one body corporate and political."[1] Nearly a century later, the divided body struggled to heal itself after two decades of repeated political woundings. The worst strife came in the year or so after the King's return to his kingdom in 1660. Two groups within the corporation competed for local control, each directing at the other the most damaging charges they could contrive. The "honest party" momentarily gained the upper hand and then attempted to restore unity the only way they knew how: they purged their foes.[2] Next, to prevent further dissensions and to tighten their grip on power, those remaining in the corporation made rules.

> Debates in all common councils ought still to be had and observed with great moderation, gravity, and modesty, and likewise without the least reflection, or reviling of any person or persons, being members and partners at such consultations, the contrary whereof doth ever occasion great animosities and much distraction amongst the councillors at such public meetings and likewise tendeth much to the great prejudice and disquiet of the weale public.[3]

Following this opening blast against political schism came a detailed code of behavior, made to prevent these "mischiefs and evils." For they *were* evils: "party" divided the social body created by God and the corporate body created by the monarch. If heresy were a crime against the lord in heaven, then party was a crime against the lord at Whitehall. Partisanship was the political kin of religious sectarian identity in an age in which such identity meant social and political exclusion as well as damnation.

Division had not been unknown before 1640, but never had it been so dangerously persistent as in the decades since. Difference of opinion had its place in the life of England's centuries-old borough corporations, whose

[1] J. Lingard, *The Charters Granted by Different Sovereigns to the Burgesses of Preston* (Preston, 1821), second pagination, p. 15.

[2] *CSPD 1661–62*, pp. 93, 102, and 229; *CSPD 1660–70*, Addendum, p. 663. PRO, SP29/42/8, 59, and 60, SP29/46/55i, and SP29/48/125. PRO, PC2/55/212v, 231v, and 235v–36.

[3] William Alexander Abram, *Memorials of the Preston Guilds* (Preston, 1882), p. 53.

members after all were "councillors," each properly bringing his own counsel about the "weale public" to assemblies. Through temperate discussion, conflicting ideas were to meld into one that could be spoken by the singular voice of the corporate body. One voice might be found by unanimous acclamation, or, if need be, a poll of members. In either case, debate and disagreement ended with the decision. In rare instances, members opposing a resolution might subscribe their dissent in corporation records, but tongues were to be still in public once the question was settled. Preston's leaders in 1662 made explicit their requirements of one another:

> All sides and parties, after the question is once over, shall in silence acquiesce and submit to such order, and not offer to show or produce any further reason, or use any reflections or reproachful terms, towards any of the council; . . . [and] no person or persons of the council aforesaid shall contrive or combine together with any other secretly, refractorily, and resolutely to make a party against the next meeting, nor shall carry on any private design for any interest whatsoever.[4]

The great political sin was not disagreement, but continuous, "contrived" division, maintained by the secret whisperings of small groups outside of formal meetings. Small parts of the whole body, meeting separately to concert their political activities, were no better than political conventicles. "Sides and parties" represented to the good of the polity the same threat that their religious counterparts did to the good of the church: both broke apart what could only be unified wholes.

Preston's leaders tried to legislate internal unity by outlawing the fractious activities and "reflections" of those who sought "resolutely to make a party" in defiance of the general good. But political reality upset their intentions.[5] While a new charter temporarily restored peace in 1662, "private designs" persisted. Partisan rather than corporate interests dominated members' thoughts, words, and deeds. There was no longer any one common good, but competing ones represented by competing groups in the corporation. The extent and careful definition of Preston's rules testify to the state of division in which they found themselves and to their desire to end it. Despite their rules, partisan competition did not end. Ultimately, rule making led the way out of their bewilderment by establishing the means for accommodating and absorbing conflict, if not, as hoped, for ending it. Over time, Preston's leaders, and those in towns all over England, came to appreciate how a divided polity did not necessarily lead to "the disquiet of the weale public," to see that partisan politics was not the politics of instability.

[4] Ibid.

[5] For conflict at Preston, see Michael Mullett, "'To Dwell Together in Unity': The Search for Agreement in Preston Politics, 1660–1690," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 125 (1974), pp. 61–81.

FROM "PARTY" TO PARTISAN POLITICS

Civil war in the 1640s and non-monarchical rule in the 1650s dismembered both national and local political bodies. Well-organized groups did political battle in communities throughout England, throwing one another from office with unprecedented virulence and frequency. Diverging religious identities, personal recriminations and political animosities, extensive purges and counter-purges: town political life in the 1640s and 50s sowed the seeds of feuding between coherent urban groups that flourished in the decades following. In a society that stressed political unity and made rules to protect it, a new politics emerged based on competition between organized, continuous opposing groups. Though universally condemned for the instability it seemed to threaten, partisan politics gradually became the political norm, and nowhere more clearly nor more pervasively than in the boroughs.

Partisanship – which is about division – and corporateness – which is about unity – are inimical to one another: this was the problem faced by borough corporations in the generations after the Civil War. In law, corporations were fictional persons with most of the same legal capacities as real ones. Images of the human body invoked one flesh and one mind, creating a moral and legal imperative for unanimity.[6] In dealing with the outside world, whether granting leases or petitioning the King, corporations had somehow to find one voice for many tongues. Thus corporations like Preston's tried to control the process by which decisions were reached. This was important, for all members were bound by the corporate will, whether or not as individuals they had concurred in a corporate resolution. No problems arose so long as the questions in difference were of little ideological, personal, or spiritual significance. Everything about the idea of corporateness denied division, but everything about the political circumstances of the post-Civil War world promoted it.

Corporations had long known occasional conflict. As Catherine Patterson has demonstrated, in an earlier age, they had ended such conflict through mediation, often with the help of noble patrons.[7] But divisions cutting across the corporations in the wake of civil war took on a new quality, a persistent, partisan quality. Partisan groups were identifiable by their durability and coherence from one conflict to the next, by the

[6] On anthropomorphism in corporate law, see C. T. Carr, *The General Principles of the Law of Corporations* (Cambridge, 1905), chapter 10.

[7] Catherine F. Patterson, "Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite, and the Crown, 1580–1640" (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1994). See also Patterson, "Conflict Resolution and Patronage in Provincial Towns, 1590–1640," *JBS* (forthcoming).

organization that gave such groups shape and impetus, and by the leadership that made organization possible. Leadership brought such groups together around shared interests, especially those concerning the role religious identity should play in determining one's fitness to participate in political life. Conflicting religious/political agendas, and the more general revulsion of political division felt by all, meant that competing groups denied the legitimacy of one another's existence. Partisan politics did not set two mutually recognized groups *within* government against one another – this is our modern notion – it pitted one group *claiming to be* the government, against an illegitimate group they argued should be excluded from government. This brings us to the essence of partisan politics: it was fundamentally negative; it was less about joining friends than about excluding foes, though accomplishing the latter required doing the former.

Political animosities first gathered themselves into partisan groups in the towns. These groups were not political parties. They had no consistent group names, no dues nor membership cards; nor were they tied together into any kind of national network. In our quest for the origins of party, we look unwittingly for institutions, models, or "systems" that are identifiably party, even as we remind ourselves not to apply modern standards or to look for national organizations. By concerning ourselves not with party, but with partisan politics – with a type of political practice, not with coherent organizations – we can understand better why political life after 1660 came to be dominated by division rather than concord, despite everyone's hopes for union. Actually, as we shall see, partisan politics was born and grew not despite the desire for union, but because of it. This is the paradox of partisan politics. The impulse to recreate corporate unity after the Civil War was strong, but the only way seventeenth-century minds could imagine doing so was by excluding those perceived to be "factious," "malignant," or otherwise illegitimate as participants in public life. But those threatened with exclusion, to protect themselves and to restore unity on their own terms, were driven by the same impulse. Thus exclusions begat exclusions, purges begat more purges. The paradox of partisan politics was that the search for unity ended up provoking more disunity.

Partisan politics in the corporations predated the rise of coherent political parties in Parliament and was the result of an evolution from consensual to competitive political norms in English society. As Mark Kishlansky has shown, competition only became a regular part of English political life during the Civil War and the decades following.[8] As competition became more fierce, partisan politics appeared, giving shape to competition by

[8] Mark Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986): see especially chapters 1, 5, and "Conclusion."

organizing political actors to work together against their foes, not only in one instance, but continuously over time. Organization and continuity is what made partisan politics so new and so alarming and differentiated it from the episodic conflict experienced in the centuries preceding.

Because of the primacy they accord Parliament, historians have always assumed that parties formed there first and then reached out into the provinces. But in seeking the origins of party – to find the first rumblings of partisan politics – we must turn this view on its head. We must redirect our gaze from Parliament, parliamentary elections, and county elites to the incorporated towns: boroughs with royal charters detailing collective rights and governmental responsibilities. By 1660, there were at least 190 corporations, and 18 more by 1727.[9] County benches, the Privy Council, Parliament, the royal courts at Westminster: no other major magisterial, administrative, nor law-making institution existed in such profusion as borough corporations, and none possessed such extensive written codes of procedure.

The corporations provide the perfect context for studying the origins and implications of partisan politics and for understanding how a society that reviled the very idea of such a politics came to accommodate it so that it would not destabilize the polity. Each of the hundreds of corporations nationwide were in uninterrupted session, most for centuries. Their thousands of members saw one another virtually every day. Though by no means democratic institutions, the corporations touched directly the daily lives of a large part of the English population, both those whose families lived in town for generations, as well as those who came now and then to attend a market, or who passed a few years there learning a trade, finding a mate, and earning an income before moving on.[10] Each town's permanent population constantly rose and fell as visitors and short-term migrants momentarily subjected themselves to the apprentice regulations, market tolls, and justice administered by corporate leaders. Institutional continuity and the close contact among governors – and between governors and the governed – suggest the possibility that a political practice based on regular personal contact, organization, and group continuity would have developed sooner in the towns than in Parliament, where such conditions would not pertain until after 1689, and that this new political practice would affect

[9] This count is made from the list in Martin Weinbaum, *British Borough Charters, 1307–1660* (Cambridge, 1943).

[10] On "large-scale movement into towns," see David Souden, "Migrants and the Population Structure of Later Seventeenth-Century Provincial Cities and Market Towns," in Peter Clark, ed., *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600–1800* (London, 1984), p. 161. See also Peter Clark's "Migration in England during the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," in Peter Clark and David Souden, eds., *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (Totowa, N.J., 1988), pp. 213–52.

many more people in hundreds of towns than if it developed in some far away place like Westminster. Lingering Civil War animosities and divided religious loyalties provided the personal and ideological reasons for partisan activity; the corporations provided the environment in which partisan groups could spawn and grow.

Given the emphasis previously placed on Parliament, "national issues," and "ideology," a brief review of the historiography is in order before considering what is to be learned from the corporations about the origins and impact of partisan politics. David Hume applied various meanings to "party." "Party rage" was born of "bigoted prejudices." At first, it was simply a part broken from the whole: a Presbyterian "party" arrayed against church and crown. They were the first, Hume said, to manipulate electoral processes for their own ends. This provided the foundation for a "country" party opposing a "court" one. Court and country, after the elections of 1679, became tory and whig.[11] While Hume condemned parties, Macaulay celebrated them, tracing an evolution of language and purposes from the conflict between crown and Parliament. He dated the origins of party precisely, when Parliament reconvened in October 1641: "From that day dates the corporate existence of the two great parties which have ever since alternately governed the country." They may have worn different labels at different times, but the ideological poles around which they gathered never changed: first they were Cavaliers and Roundheads; after the Restoration, court and country; in the Exclusion years, they became the enduring tory and whig. Rejecting Hume's cynical view, that party was the organization of bigotry, Macaulay portrayed it as the organization of the two great ideas of the polity. Parties were competing "confederacies of statesmen, a confederacy zealous for authority and antiquity, and a confederacy zealous for liberty and progress."[12] From their interplay over the years arose the finest regime on earth.

Keith Feiling took the notion of ideological descent found in Hume and Macaulay a few generations back.

> The first germs of Whig and Tory in England may be dated . . . from a wedding – the sacrament which united Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn . . . Having then the same nativity with Queen Elizabeth, the embryo parties grew in accord with the actions and reactions of the Elizabethan age, at the close of which two twin schools of thought may be discerned, decisively opposed to each other on the causes which most divide mankind – on religious truth and political power.[13]

[11] On bigotry, the Exclusion era origins of party, and the conflation of tory and whig with court and country, see David Hume, *The History of England*, 6 vols. (Indianapolis, 1983), vol. VI, pp. 353, 356–57, and 381.

[12] Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, 3 vols., (London: Everyman's edition, n.d.), vol. I, pp. 82–84, 161, and 201.

[13] Keith Feiling, *A History of the Tory Party, 1640–1714* (Oxford, 1924), p. 13.

Feiling and others drew lineages of toryism and whiggery, each with a line of begats of near biblical proportions: reformers begat puritans, begat roundheads, begat the country, begat whigs. All culminated in the Exclusion Crisis, when, as David Ogg put it, "a birth has to be recorded – that of the modern party system." Like his predecessors, Ogg saw court and country begetting tory and whig, which would become the modern parties contending with each other in the nation's legislature and on the hustings over the following centuries.[14]

An historiography based on ideological genealogies is a venerable one. But ideology, while the core of partisan identity, is too slippery for careful analysis of the origins and development of partisan politics. Genealogies suggest a coherence and continuity present more in the minds of historians than in the line of parents and progeny they try to draw. More recent work, while continuing to give important place to ideology, does so by stressing the role of organization, the leadership that made organization possible, and the arena in which such leaders worked: Parliament. J. R. Jones highlighted the role of leadership. The Earl of Danby's parliamentary organization supporting royal policies in the 1670s served both as model for and cause of subsequent whig organization in opposition to him. To some, Danby's policies threatened Protestantism and society; their response was to rally round their own leader, the Earl of Shaftesbury, who successfully manipulated the so-called "Popish Plot" to galvanize a potent political force.[15] Andrew Browning looked back to the 1660s and the Earl of Clarendon's attempts at parliamentary control, itself resulting from even earlier forces.[16] Each of these interpretations stressed the role played by prominent individuals in creating a party. Parties were clearly more than competing sets of ideas; they were people organized around certain ideas, organized by one or more leaders' coordinating efforts.

Since Hume, this has been an historiography driven by modern notions of party: two national organizations whose efforts focus on Parliament as the only institution where party goals would have any meaning and the only one where partisan organizations could be developed and directed toward achieving those goals. Recently, a renaissance in Restoration studies has produced a number of challenges to these ideas about the origins of party and even whether we can find parties at all between 1678 and 1681. Jonathan Scott has assaulted older interpretive verities most directly. The "Restoration crisis" did not generate "'parties,' but polarities

[14] David Ogg, *England in the Reign of Charles II*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1984), pp. 606–08.

[15] J. R. Jones, *The First Whigs: The Politics of the Exclusion Crisis, 1678–1683* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 20–21.

[16] Andrew Browning, "Parties and Party Organization in the Reign of Charles II," *TRHS*, 4th ser., 30 (1948), p. 21.

of belief."[17] Mark Knights makes a similar point: "We should look for the community of sentiment rather than the structure of party."[18] By their studies of politics at court and Parliament between 1678 and 1681, Knights and Scott have largely dismantled Jones's argument that one can find coherent parties forming at Westminster.

Then where shall we look for these more elusive "polarities of belief" and "communit[ies] of sentiment"? Scott has suggested that perhaps to search at all is to chase a mirage: "in the absence of evidence for the existence of such 'parties' what is presently taking its place is the assumption that although such organization does not 'appear on the surface', it may be taken to be operating out of sight."[19] But perhaps our eyes are pointed in the wrong direction. The "surface" appears to be Parliament and the court in the years 1678 to 1681. Looking beneath Parliament, and looking beyond these years, has made other scholars more hopeful of finding something. Knights is one of these, who, while reluctant to use the word "party" to discuss extra-parliamentary politicking, has helped us understand how the nation became politicized through pamphlet wars and petitioning campaigns in 1678 to 1681.[20] Tim Harris, who even more than Knights has looked to the world beyond Whitehall and Westminster, has been more bold, consistently arguing that by looking outside of Parliament, we can see that "party" remains useful for understanding these years.[21] Harris not only looks to the local level; he suggests that we search further back in time as well because the rise of party was a "*process*," not an event.[22] Likewise, Mark Goldie has argued that we should look earlier than we have for "party," and well beyond Westminster too: "our notion of party should not be allied too closely with parliaments and electorates, nor with the new party labels that appeared in 1679 . . . the many institutions that made up the wider society beyond Parliament had long provided arenas for sharp contests."[23] If Parliament is the "surface," looking beneath offers possibilities for further insights into the origins of partisan politics. And happily, this world beneath the surface may be closer to view than a

[17] Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis, 1677–1683* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 14.

[18] Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678–1681* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 143. Chapter 1 contains an excellent overview of the historiography of "party."

[19] Scott, *Sidney and the Restoration Crisis*, p. 21.

[20] Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, part two.

[21] Tim Harris, "Party Turns? Or, Whigs and Tories Get Off Scott Free," *Albion*, 25 (1993), p. 582. See too Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987).

[22] Tim Harris, *Politics under the Later Stuarts: Party Conflict in a Divided Society, 1660–1715* (London, 1993), pp. 6 and 109.

[23] Mark Goldie, "Danby, the Bishops and the Whigs," in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie, eds., *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 78.

more pessimistic assessment might allow. By looking for partisan politics rather than anachronistically conceived political parties, and by looking where partisan politics was "operating out of sight" – in England's hundreds of borough corporations – we will find local leaders dividing, organizing, and competing.

THE RHETORIC OF "PARTY" AND THE PARADOX OF PARTISAN POLITICS

To understand a transformation of political culture, to understand how partisan politics evolved, we need to understand how people talked about politics. Only then can we see the paradox of partisan politics: how the desire to end conflict, and the language used to condemn competition, were actually the most potent forces driving the creation of partisan politics after the Civil Wars. We must begin by looking at language not only because it reflects something about the beliefs and ideas of those using it, but because the words, and especially the figurative language people used, shaped the world in which they lived. As we shall see, language was used to mark those who were politically suspect and in turn to cut them out of politics altogether. The hope was that by doing so, it would create union. It did not.

Tim Harris has drawn a distinction between political organizing around ideology and organizing around other interests: "Unity based on 'professed principles' distinguished parties from 'factions' . . . party was something more than mere faction."[24] But a distinction between party and faction is based more on our notions and language of party than those current three centuries ago. Thus Mark Kishlansky finds that as "party" came to acquire its modern political meaning in the 1640s, its use was often synonymous with "faction." And Mark Knights, in looking at the common phrase, "the factious party," notes that "the two elements of this label were, for contemporaries, interchangeable in a way no longer acceptable to modern definitions."[25] Party did not come in two forms, one more acceptable because it was ideologically rather than instrumentally motivated. This is a modern construct, one in which we grudgingly respect our partisan foes for their commitment to their cause while opposing the cause itself. We admire the desire to win and consider it legitimate when directed toward some ends, not others: ideological rather than self-interested ones. This distinction was not made in the seventeenth century, when the desire to win, for any reason, was condemned as divisive and dangerous. The political

[24] Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts*, p. 5.

[25] Mark Kishlansky, "The Emergence of Adversary Politics in the Long Parliament," *Journal of Modern History*, 49 (1977), pp. 625–26. Knights, *Politics and Opinion*, p. 145.

process was supposed to compose differences, not produce winners and losers.[26]

Even as late as 1740, "party" and "faction" were conflated in David Hume's movement back and forth between them. While Hume recognized the existence of non-ideological parties, he differentiated between two types of party *or* faction, not between party *and* faction. "Factions may be divided into PERSONAL and REAL; that is, into factions founded on personal friendship or animosity among such as compose the contending parties, and into those founded on some real difference of sentiment or interest . . . a party may be denominated either personal or real, according to that principle which is predominant."[27] Hume's language slips between "faction" and "party" to condemn both as one. Townsmen in the generations before Hume also elided party and faction into a single notion equated with sedition and political ruin. From Gloucester in 1670 came news of "a seditious faction . . . a Presbyterian party."[28] In Thetford, the "fierce and factious proceedings of the triumphing party" in choosing a new recorder was part of a larger "design to unsettle the corporation."[29] Party or faction was as great an evil in the minds of those who challenged strict ecclesiastical uniformity as among Anglican "loyalists." William Prynne decried the corporations bill debated in Parliament in 1661 from fears it would perpetuate "divisions, contentions, factions, and parties."[30] "Party," "faction": both signified the illegitimate formation of groups within the whole which threatened the life of the whole by breaking it into parts.

Organized division of any kind – faction *and* party – was an evil and it remained an evil in political rhetoric for generations, long after political reality had changed. Benjamin Calamy accused those breaking off from the whole of the sin of pride: "pride is always the cause of the quarrel that makes the breach and forms the party."[31] Condemnations of the evils of division rang through sermons preached before corporations on mayoral election days and other civic occasions: "the wars and fighting among ourselves can proceed from no other cause, but those lusts that war in our

[26] For this point in the early seventeenth-century urban context, see Patterson, "Urban Patronage," chapter 3. More generally, see Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection*, part one.

[27] David Hume, "Of Parties in General," in Eugene F. Miller, ed., *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis, 1987), p. 56.

[28] *CSPD 1670*, pp. 419–20. [29] Ibid. *1668–69*, pp. 571–72.

[30] [William Prynne], *Summary Reasons, Humbly Tendered to the Most Honorable House of Peers . . . against the New Intended Bill for Governing and Reforming Corporations* [London, 1661]. For another conflation of faction and party, see Roger North, *Examen; Or, An Enquiry into the Credit and Veracity of a Pretended Complete History* (London, 1740), pp. iii–iv.

[31] Quoted in John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 265–66.

members."[32] This was Satan's work. "All contentions and factions come from the devil, and gratifie him, whose nature is spiteful and malicious."[33] John March made much the same point before Newcastle upon Tyne's corporation: "Though Satan be the principal cause of schisms and divisions, yet he employs the lusts and passions of men as instruments to raise them."[34] Following this oft-used formula, Edward Fowler identified partisan division as an "evil spirit, when 'tis gotten into societies, tendeth mightily to the debauching of them."[35] He targeted not a specific party or parties, but the phenomenon of partisanship. Preachers regularly referred to the Book of Matthew (12:25): "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." Across the political/religious spectrum, everyone agreed that unity was both a social necessity and a Christian duty. Gilbert Burnet saw little reason to belabor so common a theme: "I shall not enter into a Panegyrick of unity, or a declamation against discord; a man may as well praise light or commend health or show his eloquence in disparaging the gout or stone."[36]

But unity of what? Unity of all, to be gained through forgiveness, or unity of some – of the "righteous" – to be gained through exclusion of the unrighteous? In other words, two potential solutions to party existed: bring in political apostates or cut them off. Some preachers touched upon Gospel themes of forgiveness, and, like Burnet, hoped that all might be comprehended in a single community of believers. John Griffith reminded his listeners at Reading of the Thessalonians, who "were a people too prone to be turbulent, and . . . apt to create factions and disturbances." So he suggested that "all men should endeavor to promote love and unity in the town or place of their abode."[37] Others asked their congregations to remember Psalms 122: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."[38] Of course this really just avoided the main issue: if one prayed for peace, how would peace be achieved? By turning the other cheek, or by destroying the damned?

[32] Thomas Long, *The Original of War: Or, The Causes of Rebellion* (London, 1684), p. 1.

[33] John Griffith, *A Sermon Preached at St. Lawrence Church in Reading . . . [on] the Day on which the Mayor was Sworn* (London, 1693), p. 21.

[34] John March, *Sermons Preach'd on Several Occasions* (London, 1699), p. 109. For the same theme, see ibid., pp. 36–38, 107, and 109–12.

[35] Edward Fowler, *A Sermon Preached at the General Meeting of the Gloucestershire-Men* (London, 1685), p. 26.

[36] Gilbert Burnet, *An Exhortation to Peace and Union: A Sermon Preached . . . at the Election of the Lord-Mayor* (London, 1681), p. 3.

[37] Griffith, *A Sermon Preached at Reading*, pp. 3 and 7.

[38] Martin Blake, *An Earnest Plea for Peace and Moderation in a Sermon, Preached at Barnstaple* (London, 1661), p. 4. Clement Barksdale, *A Sermon Preached upon the Fifth of November, 1679, in the Cathedral Church at Gloucester* (Oxford, 1680). Henry Glover, *An Exhortation to Prayer for Jerusalem's Peace. In a Sermon Preached at Dorchester* (London, 1663).

Most sermons turned on texts promoting divine retribution instead of charity. Their authors played on strains of righteous magistracy that echo through St. Paul's letters. "The punishment of unjust men," John Jeffrey reminded Norwich corporation, "is a vindication of the just God, and demonstrates his providence and his equity."[39] It is in this appeal to divine justice, wielded to maintain Christian unity, that we hear the shrill language that drove the partisan paradox, that imposed retribution in the name of unity.

There was a suspicion, an abhorrence, of unity with the evil. William Williams, in the pulpit at Haverfordwest, which had endured years of partisan ejections from the corporation and plenty of litigation to reverse them, celebrated a newly made local peace in 1682. But Williams also warned of potential dangers in readmitting the refractory: "There are some unions [that] look more like conspiracies, than peace."[40] Similarly, ministers like Richard Wroe could easily in one breath explain that "everything in our religion is an argument to unity . . . there is one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all." Then, in the next breath, Wroe lashed out, reminding his hearers of "The caution [St. Paul] gives to the Romans . . . 'Mark them which cause divisions and offences, and avoid them'." Wroe, preaching to Preston's corporation, continued: "I mean not a mark of private grudge and revenge, but . . . a mark of shame and disgrace . . . a mark of infamy and reproach . . . a mark of distinction, which the laws set upon them . . . let the magistrate know that in this respect he bears not the sword in vain."[41] Like so many others, Wroe invoked Romans, chapter 13: "For he beareth not the sword in vain."[42] Following this logic, another clergyman goaded Grantham's leaders to excise sin: "The way for you to cure the wounds of and breaches of the body politic is to cleanse out the rotten and corrupted humors thereof . . . It is sin that opens not only a gap between God and

[39] John Jeffrey, *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of Norwich, at the Mayor's Guild* (London, 1693), p. 15.

[40] William Williams, *The Necessity & Extent of the Obligation, with the Manner and Measures of Restitution, in a Sermon, Preached . . . Before the Corporation of Haverford-West* (London, 1682), p. 29. The use of "restitution" may well refer to the fact that a writ of mandamus was often called a writ of restitution. Six members had recently been restored to the corporation by mandamus. PRO, KB21/20/32a.v, 63, 66v, and 97v.

[41] Richard Wroe, *The Beauty of Unity, in a Sermon Preached at Preston* (London, 1682), pp. 13 and 31–32. Joshua Richardson used the same text from Paul's epistles: *A Sermon Preach'd before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London* (London, 1682), p. 16.

[42] For this usage, see B. Rively, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Cathedral of Norwich upon . . . the Mayors Admission to his Office* (London, 1679), pp. 1 and 6; Nathanael Ellison, *The Magistrates Obligation to Punish Vice: A Sermon Preach'd before . . . the Mayor . . . of Newcastle upon Tyne* (London, 1700), pp. 4–5 and 11; and Samuel Bradford, *A Sermon Preach'd . . . At the Election of the Lord Mayor* (London, 1700), especially pp. 14–15.